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Woman's Work
for
African Women.

Mrs. J. T. Gracey.

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BY MRS. J. T. GRACEY.

Armies and navies, conferences and treaties have done much toward the uplifting of the great African Continent. But European and American enterprise may build railroads throughout her borders, navigate her magnificent rivers, and develop her material resources ; yet until her women are lifted up mentally and socially, Africa cannot take her proper place among the nations of the Earth.

Sunken in barbarism, with mental powers dwarfed, individuality depressed, neglected in sickness, deserted in dying, bartered for cloth or for cattle, with heart crushed, and burdened with sorrow, unloved and uncared for, with the environments of sensuality and debasement, African women appeal to the heart of Christian womanhood throughout the world.

From the harem of the Khedive of Egypt to the kraals of South Africa, polygamy is a time-honored institution, and the idea of women as property to be bought and sold is thoroughly grounded in the African mind, and none but those who have witnessed its workings, can adequately conceive the degradation and misery it involves, or the strong counteracting influence it presents to philanthropic labor. Dr. Tyler says ; "Mind and heart are brutalized by it, and it presents the most gigantic obstacle to the elevation of the African women." Dr. Nassau says, "It is a bitter root, that erects a tree whose thorny arms meet us

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at every path. It debases women, disregards marriage, destroys the family, and interferes with the control of female pupils in our schools."

Woman, not being secluded in Africa is accessible to missionary effort. Dr. Cust says ; " Woman's work exists in abundance, and is of the highest quality, but is necessarily auxiliary to that of the ordained missionary." Wherever the Missionary has gone to penetrate the darkness, there has followed the devoted wife to supplement his work. Unmarried women have also braved the trials of the deadly climate, have worked and suffered in isolation, have met dangers and even death, that they might carry a living Gospel to the people. The quiet work of Christian women has carried into this deepest of heathen darkness, the light which has made their own lives rich and beautiful, and as a result, many of Africa's daughters are taking their places in the Christian home and in the Christian church, the companions and helpers of their Christian husbands. Scattered in villages far from their missionary teachers and guides, there are many native women, who, keeping the treasure of gospel knowledge which had been committed to them, and led by the converting and enlightening Spirit of God, are not only living Christian lives themselves, among their heathen sisters, but all doing good as they have opportunity.

The Continent of Africa is occupied by somes eventy-five Missionary Societies, the majority of which have some specific form of work for girls and women.

NORTH AFRICA.

In *Northeast Africa* Woman's Missionary work in Egypt commenced as early as 1836. An English lady, Miss Holliday, of superior education, had become deeply interested in Egypt. She had devoted her attention to the

study of Egyptian antiquities, and to the acquisition of the Arabic and Coptic languages. Her great desire was to consecrate herself to the intellectual, moral and spiritual elevation of the Egyptian women. Miss Holliday left England in company with another lady, Miss Rogers, under the Society for the Promotion of Female Education in the East, and upon arriving at Cairo took charge of a school of eighty-five girls. She had occupied this position but a short time, when a new and unexpected sphere of labor opened. The Pasha of Egypt sent one of his officers to make a formal request that she would undertake the education of all the women in his harem, over a hundred in number, assuring her that this was but the beginning of female education in the country. After much prayer and consultation with friends, she decided to accept what was considered a very providential opening. The Prime Minister, in a communication to Miss H. said, "In introducing an enlightened female education into Egypt, we shall be striking at the root of the evils which afflict us. In seconding my illustrious Prince in his work, I have as yet been able to trace our debasement to no other cause than the want of an efficient moral and useful education for our women."

Miss H. besides her work in the palace organized schools in the City, and continued her work for ten years. When she entered Egypt scarcely a woman could read, and at the expiration of the ten years, hundreds were found reading good and useful books.

The next effort was made by Miss Whately of England who went to Egypt for her health, and was so impressed with the degradation of Muhammadan girls and women, that she gave her life to their interests. Miss Holliday had commenced with the higher classes; Miss Whately

began with the lowest. She established harem visitation, and found some willing to receive the gospel. She also founded schools, a medical mission, and inaugurated a ministry of love which is being felt to-day throughout the country. Her schools became so successful that the Khedive presented her with grounds upon which to erect buildings commensurate with her developing work. Miss Whately toiled for thirty years, but not without violent opposition. When she entered upon her work she was cursed, stoned, had dirt thrown upon her as she walked in the streets, but by her devotion she overcame all prejudices, and was acknowledged a great power. She lived to see hundreds of Egyptian women go out from her, devoted Christians, competent to establish Christian work and perpetuate her teachings. This work was accomplished by one woman, in a city said to be, "the most Muhammadan city in the world," boasting 500 Mosques and a great Muhammadan University. Other agencies entered this field, developing Christian work among the women, but none with greater efficiency than the United Presbyterian Church of America, which commenced work in Cairo 1854, among Copts and Muhammadans. This mission has extended until it takes in fifty-two stations. The women and girls are reached by their agents through schools, house-visiting and Bible women, prayer meetings, and Sabbath schools. At the close of 1891 (latest statistics) one half of the communicants in their Egyptian Church were women. The Society has twenty-one schools for girls, with over two thousand pupils. Two of these are boarding schools, known as the "Pressly Memorial Institute," and "The Kyatt School." The pupils in these institutions come from towns and villages, scattered over the country, and furnish Christian teachers, many of whom are wielding a great influence

for-good, In Cairo a large school is supported of more than three-hundred girls, a large proportion of the pupils coming from Muhammadan families. Thirty-three teachers for women are employed, having under their care over a thousand hearers of the truth in their homes. In one station a red-turbaned elder in the Church teaches the women, who asked that an Arabic Psalm book be given to ten women as prizes. In another station meetings for Coptic women are held by two enlightened priests, who read and explain the scriptures in their own language. "Through the influence of these agencies" one of their missionaries says, "I see great advancement in civilization by having better houses and furniture, fewer slaves, and a more encouraging interest in religion and a less desire for controversy".

The *North African Mission* organized in 1881 to reach the Kabyles of Algeria, and re-organized in 1883 in order to extend its sphere of operations to other Berber races, is doing an excellent work among the women. Of the Missionaries employed by the Society, 39 out of 54 are women. Education is not a prominent, but subordinate feature of their work. They have established a medical work, not distinctly for women, but have many women patients. Their hospitals are located at Tangier, Fez, and Tripoli. The Tullock Memorial hospital at Tangier stands on the spot where one of their missionaries "fell on sleep".

At most of the stations a little medical work has been done, but in Algeria much difficulty has been experienced, through the law *forbidding the practise of medicine* without a French diploma.

North Africa affords a wide field for Christian women to labor for God, as they only, as a rule, can enter the homes

of the people and reach the women. They are also regarded with less suspicion, it being thought that they are not likely to be able to pervert any one.

During the past year (1892) the Sultan of Morocco issued orders forbidding any intercourse between Moorish women and Missionaries, believing communication between Moorish and English women threatens innovations in the laws, and corrupts religion.

When it was announced that the French Government had served a notice on the missionaries of the North Africa Mission to leave Algeria it was hoped that it would not be carried into effect. Recently, however, it has been renewed, and it is said that Lord Rosebery has been compelled to notify the missionaries that if they do not withdraw they cannot expect the protection of the British Government. It is stated also that the same decree applies to four Swedish missionaries who have been in the country a few months. The fact that by far the greater number of missionaries are women, and that they are forbidden to preach to any whether French or native, shows that the purpose is to effectually stop all evangelistic work, and is not directed particularly against the English.

SOUTH AFRICA.

We find that as early as 1742 the first Evangelical Missionary went to South Africa ; the devoted Schmidt of the Moravian Church. He did some successful work, but after a time met with such opposition he was compelled to leave, not, however, until he had baptised his first Hottentot converts, two of whom were women, the first-fruits of the South African Church. Some fifty years afterward the London Missionary Society sent Robert Moffat and his devoted wife Mary. Into midnight darkness went this

refined educated young Scotch woman. It was her task to be a pioneer, to lay the foundations of woman's work, which was accomplished under untold difficulties.

She must be her own cook, for none of the natives knew how to cook. If they did, they would not help her for any consideration. She must do her own washing, for none of the natives ever heard of such a thing as cleanliness, and they were far too lazy to even learn how to wash. And her domestic work must be done with few conveniences or none, in a wattled hut with an earth floor, with not even the dream of a "kitchen." Into this hut came one, two, or twenty native women, filling the space, prying into everything, nearly or quite naked, and leaving a daub of red or yellow ochre wherever their skin happened to touch anything. The Christian woman, they regarded as a curiosity to be laughed at, abused, or robbed, as it pleased them. When her back was turned, they all with one accord seized any article they could lay their hands on, and made off with it. If she remonstrated, a stick of wood or a stone was thrown at her head. Whenever the hut was left alone, they would steal all the food, and whatever else they wanted.

"Hoping all things, enduring all things," for fifty years she labored, and was permitted to see marvelous changes in the condition of South African women. She wrought by faith, for writing to a friend at home, after they had been toiling for several years and without a single convert, she said, "Do send us a communion service, we do not need it now, but we shall need it." Months passed, a few gave evidence of a changed life, arrangements were made to celebrate the Lord's Supper on a certain Sabbath, and strange to say, an English steamer arrived the Saturday

previous, having on it the Communion Service. That Sabbath marked an era in her work and in the history of the mission.

In the year 1835 Missionaries of the American Board reached the Southern field. More than ten years after the Mission was established, they baptised their first convert, a woman, whose son was afterward ordained pastor of the church she thus founded. A few years more and other missionaries were added, bringing into the environments of debasing heathenism their devoted wives and soon a transforming power was seen and felt. Kraal schools for the lowest in the social scale were established, next Station schools for the children of Christians, then the boarding and industrial school. These women wrought with heart and soul, and children and heathen women learned to love and implicitly trust them. The names of Mrs. Lindley, Tyler, Mellen, Wilder, Rood, Robbins, and Abraham will ever be associated with Woman's work for Africa's women, several of them having spent from thirty-five to forty years in labors abundant. Nor should we omit to speak of Mrs. Parker Lloyd of New York City, daughter of the distinguished physician, Dr. Willard Parker, who went to Natal, and after her husband's death carried on the work in the station alone for several years. Thoroughly educated, in possession of all that wealth could furnish, she gladly gave herself for the redemption of the people.

The *Inanda Seminary* for girls in connection with the American Board Mission, is not only a school but a home, which has been conducted by an American woman, Mrs. Edwards for twenty-five years. Special attention is paid to needle work, as well as domestic employment and gardening. So anxious are girls to attend this school that they frequently run away from their kraals, pursued by

their fathers or brothers whose chief desire is to secure the cattle for which they may be sold when of a marriageable age.

Dr. Day, of Africa, says: "Give an African simply brain-culture without teaching him industrial habits and you have a fool." The gardens of this school are cultivated by the girls alone, and produce annually over a thousand bushels of vegetables for the supply of their tables.

So wonderful an influence has this school exerted on the community, that during an epidemic recently, which occurred during planting time, when the school was dismissed, and the pupils gone home, the people, fearing the school work would be interrupted, came fifty strong with twelve plows and seventy oxen, and plowed and planted about seventeen acres, the women promising to come later and do the weeding.

The *Umzumbe Home* is another school for girls carried on the same principles. The majority of the scholars come from heathen kraals, without previous preparation. Graduates of the school are said to be exerting a most salutary influence in their heathen homes.

It is remarkable to notice the change in sentiment regarding the treatment of women, by the native church legislating concerning these customs without suggestions from outside. Dr. Tyler tells of a church of only fifteen members adopting laws whereby "no polygamist shall be allowed to become a member of the church," and "anyone who sells his daughter or sister, treating them like a horse or cow cannot be received into the church."

Many of the Missionary Societies in South Africa have seminaries and schools for training teachers, and *nine* female seminaries on the Mt. Holyoke plan have been established by American women, to train the girls and

fit them for useful service. Some of these seminaries are said to be self-supporting. Prominent among these is the *Huguenot Seminary*, founded at Wellington, Cape Colony, over twenty years ago by two American women, graduates of Mt. Holyoke. While this institution has been pre-eminently for the descendents of Colonists, its influence has been felt in the regions beyond among the native women. More than a thousand young girls have been educated and some have gone out as teachers and some as missionaries to the natives.

Its Missionary Society affiliated with twenty-five local societies, supports eight women who have been sent forth as far as Lake Nyassa. Six are in the diamond fields of Kimberly. This institution is called the "light of the Cape," and well, for it is also the headquarters of the Women's Christian Temperance Union of South Africa. Ten other institutions have developed from this.

Lovedale. Few missionary institutions are better known, or have had a wider influence than Lovedale, which during its history has sent out a large number of pupils, over two-hundred girls. This is under the direction of the Free Church of Scotland. A branch institution has been founded at Blantyre, and at both useful industries are taught. In June a lady connected with the church of Scotland sailed from England for Blantyre at her own charges, and is not to receive any salary for her services. Before leaving she acquired the art of book-binding and shoe-mending that she might teach the pupils. She took with her also a supply of tools, and two presses, proposing to bind all needed school books.

WEST AFRICA.

In West Africa at *Sierra Leone*, about 1815, the English established a colony for liberated slaves. Here a

missionary from England was appointed with his devoted wife. She made an effort to do something for the women of the colony, but her health soon broke down, and she was compelled to return home. A few years afterward her husband was taken ill and started for home. In his last moments on board the vessel he was attended by a native woman, who, he said, "was the first woman on the West Coast to accept Christianity."

Many efforts were made to establish work, but the dreadful mortality among the missionaries interfered. At Sierra Leone, after years, was established an institution known as the "Annie Walsh Memorial School," which attained a high reputation, and in it have labored a noble succession of English Christian women, notably, Miss Sass, who has been as the head of it for nearly twenty-five years. A similar institution is located at Lagos.

In *Liberia* extensive efforts have been made, not only to reach the women there, but in the interior. Many representatives of Christian churches have been on the field with varying experiences. The missionary societies all have successful schools for girls.

The Protestant Episcopal Church of America has a girls' school at Cape Mount and an orphan asylum for girls at Cape Palmas, There is now teaching in this asylum a young Christian woman, who more than twenty years ago was given to those in charge of the institution by her heathen parents.

In the year 1834 the Methodist Episcopal Church sent the first unmarried woman to Liberia. Her associates in Monrovia fell under the power of the dreaded African fever, and all died or were compelled to return home. She stood alone unflinchingly at her post until the mission

was re-inforced, suffering in the meantime some terrible experiences. Upon one occasion a blood-thirsty band of inland natives, wild and wholly untouched by Christianizing influences, made a sudden raid upon the settlement where the mission was located. She was captured, bound hopelessly hand and foot, and thrown upon the bottom of one of their rude boats. There in that awful situation, unable to move at all, she was borne up the stream for three weary days amid the wildest of the jungles of that up country. She soon saw by their looks and frightful gestures that her captors were cannibals and were counting on a feast out of her body. From this perilous position she was most marvelously released without injury. In relating the story she said: "Near the close of the third day I was unbound, set on shore and left to myself, amid the cries of wild beasts, still mysteriously left untouched by them. I made my way as best I could along the brier-and-brush entangled banks of the stream, till, at length I reached the settlement in safety, and was permitted to labor a short time." Following her, went Ann Wilkins who for many years gave herself to all forms of work for the women of Liberia. She established a Seminary at White Plains which for some years was quite successful. Her name is held to-day in loving remembrance throughout Liberia.

A successful Industrial School for boys and girls is carried on at the Lutheran Mission, some thirty miles from Monrovia. The first girls received for opening the school in 1860 were taken from a captured slave ship. Mrs. Day, wife of the missionary, has for eighteen years superintended the school, which has ninety boys and forty girls. The pupils, many of them, marry and settle about the mission on land reserved for the purpose and presented to them, each family receiving five acres. These Christian families thus

form the nucleus of a Christian community, and their neighbors see in their thrift, comfort and habits of life an illustration of Christianity.

In connection with the Gaboon and Corisco mission of the Presbyterian church are names of women that will ever be identified with Woman's Work in Africa. Mrs. Walker, Preston and Bushnell as connected with the Baraka girl's school; Mrs. Dr. Nassau who left a deep impress on the hearts of the women, and whose hymn-book is ever on the lips of the native church; Mrs. Reutlinger and Mrs. De Heer who have seen twenty nine and twenty-seven years respectively in service, and who for several years past have "*manned*" stations, with all that such a position implies; and Miss Nassau who for twenty-five years has done every form of mission work, sailing up and down African rivers in her own boat "Evangeline," translating and printing her own little books for her schools on her own press!

One woman on the West Coast, Hannah Kilham by name, became celebrated for her philanthropic efforts to help these people. For ten years, with unabating zeal, she worked and traveled, opening schools and devoting especial attention to the languages and dialects of the country, that no means might be left untried for their conversion to Christ.

EASTERN AND CENTRAL AFRICA.

Missionary work commenced in East Africa in 1844, when the devoted Krapf settled at Mombasa. Here in a little while he buried his wife and child. Some years after he wrote "many missionaries may fall in the fight, yet the survivors will pass over the slain in the trenches, and take this great African fortress for the Lord." Thirty years after he buried his wife, a Christian settlement was organized on the spot,

and women rescued from slavery have been receiving Christian instruction there. As the country was opened up to civilization, missionary societies took possession, planting their schools and churches and reaching the women through all possible agencies. The London Missionary Society, American Baptist and Bishop Taylor's self-supporting work have their devoted women in a chain of stations almost across the continent. In one of Bishop Taylor's stations, a woman who is a superior teacher, linguist and missionary is the sole occupant. Another station in French territory is cared for by a woman, who has her coffee farm, her fruit garden, and has established a boarding school for girls, goes out among the villages to teach, and does this largely at her own expense.

Women in many localities seem desirious of instruction, and in several instances have given up their *fetiches*, and have come into the Christian church. But not without great sacrifice and loss of life has this work been inaugurated. Krapf's wife lies at Mombosa overlooking the Indian ocean. Mary, the devoted wife of Livingstone, is under the Boabab tree, in Central Africa, and Mrs. Comber with other brave women-workers rest on the Congo. "In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often," have they done this work.

The influence of the teacher upon the heart of the African woman is illustrated by the following touching incident from Robert Moffat's experience :

"In one of my early journeys I came, with my companions, to a heathen village on the banks of the Orange River. We had traveled far, and were hungry, thirsty

and fatigued ; but the people of the village rather roughly directed us to halt at a distance from water, though within sight of the river.

When twilight grew on, a woman approached from the height beyond which the village lay. She bore on her head a bundle of wood, and had a vessel of milk in her hand. The latter she handed to us, laid down the wood and returned to the village without opening her lips. A second time she approached, with a cooking vessel on her head, a leg of mutton in one hand, and water in the other. She sat down, without saying a word, prepared the fire and put on the meat.

We asked her again and again who she was. She remained silent, until we affectionately entreated her to give a reason for such unlooked for kindness to strangers. Then the tears rolled down her sable cheeks, and she replied : 'I love Him whose you are, and surely it is my duty to give you a cup of cold water in His name. My heart is full, therefore I can't speak the joy I feel at seeing you in this out-of-the-world place.'

On learning a little of her history, and that she was a solitary light burning in a dark place, I asked her how she kept up the light of God in the entire absence of the communion of saints. She drew from her bosom a copy of the Dutch New Testament, which she had received when in a mission school some years before. 'This,' said she, 'is the fountain whence I drink ; this is the oil that makes my lamp burn.' I looked on the precious relic, and my joy can be imagined, while we mingled our prayers and sympathies together at the throne of the heavenly father."

Again, on the borders of Mashonaland, Central Africa, recently, a missionary was resting in his wagon after a wearisome march. Suddenly he heard a woman's voice

singing the well-known tune "Old Hundred." He said, "I hastened to unravel the mystery and found the singer was apparently a 'raw' Kaffir, and there was nothing to indicate that she had been to a Christian service. But I soon learned her simple story. A good many years ago she had lived in the capital of Matabeleland, and there she heard of the story of the Cross. Little by little she had gained hold of the truth until she became one of the most promising scholars in the Mission school. But the king heard of her progress and not wishing to put her to death, he banished her from the country. She had then traveled hundreds of weary miles, always with her face to the North, and away from the place where she had found the Gospel. At length she came to the village near which we were outspanned. Ever since her banishment she had been trying to keep her faith alive in the midst of dense heathenism, and now at length she meets again with those who will teach her the right way.

The voluntary rising in parts of the country of the women to aid themselves, their pleading for instruction and guidance, their increasing accessibility, are most encouraging features.

The land that has given to the world such a beautiful example of motherly devotion and spirituality, as that of Monica, and of heroic martyrdom for the truth's sake as Felicitas, will yet develop a womanhood that shall come out from the shadows of brutality, stupidity, slavery and tyranny to take its place with the cultivated Christian womanhood of the world.

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